

**Nashville State Technical Community
College**

Music Technology

Academic Audit

Self-Study Report

December 16, 2004

Academic Audit-Part 1 Overall Performance

Introduction

The mission of the Music Technology Program of Nashville State Technical Community College is to provide a well-rounded curriculum of music related technical, creative, and business courses designed to prepare students for a variety of employment opportunities within the music industry. The Music Technology Program offers a one-year Technical Certificate.

Overall Performance

As a young program (3 graduating classes), Music Technology has experienced a steady period of growth, not only in enrollment, but also in the technical facilities, which are central to the students' understanding of what takes place in the real world of recording and music production. Hands-on training to prepare students for today's rapidly changing technological environments is our primary goal, and in most cases makes up at least 50% of classroom time. Examples of how students learn by doing include live recording sessions, often with professional studio musicians; songwriting and creation of original works; music produced by students at digital audio workstations in our computer/music lab; music marketing, promotion and sales via the internet; equipment design and repair; ear training; and creation of professionally acceptable artist presentations.

Some of the courses offered require students to exhibit skillful operation of equipment and practical implementation of the concepts and techniques learned. They are then individually graded according to their ability to follow directions, perform mechanical tasks, and apply lessons. Based on this grade instructors are then able to offer extra guidance where needed.

Indicators used to judge the overall quality of the Music Technology program and its effectiveness include the results of interviews with graduates who are currently employed in the music industry, students who have studied at other schools, and employers' feedback about our students as well as students of other similar programs. Another important source of information used to assess quality is our advisory committee, which includes industry professionals, working graduates, and some faculty members.

The Music Technology faculty is composed of 2 full time, and 8 adjunct, instructors. All of our adjunct instructors are working professionals who are, on a daily basis, exposed to student interns or graduates of a number of schools. This provides the instructors with an excellent means of determining how our students and graduates measure up with others.

Nashville State Technical Community College requires that all students evaluate their instructors and classes near the end of each semester, and the instructors then receive the results of these evaluations. Specific areas covered by the evaluation include the instructor's presentation of course content, the instructor's explanation of student responsibilities for the course, text materials, and an overall rating of the instructor and also of the course.

We have found that many students who are studying the more technical subjects for the first time are often intimidated and overwhelmed by the sheer amount and complexity of equipment used by professionals. Because of this, attempting to merely explain the use of new equipment and techniques often adds to their confusion. For this reason much of our instruction is done via interactive classroom demonstrations. For example, rather than just telling the students what makes up a computer they actually disassemble/reassemble one in class. Another use of interactive demonstrations is that students are encouraged to develop problem-solving skills. For example, in our Advanced Studio Recording class, to help students better understand things like signal flow, cables and connections, and the roll of various components, they are presented with a big pile of equipment and are then asked to hook it all up and create a functioning recording and playback system.

Some courses feature interactive presentations by industry professionals such as attorneys, hit songwriters, publishers and others who are available to answer questions and discuss specific topics of interest to students. In addition to the guests' re-enforcement of material presented by the instructor, students also benefit by interacting with individuals who bring a variety of different perspectives to the same topic. Each semester, the Advanced Songwriting class hosts a presentation featuring original material performed before a live audience. Not only does this encourage students to open up creatively, express themselves, and perform in public, it also provides the instructor with more tools to assess student learning.

We have identified several areas in the program that can be improved. Since beginning this self-evaluation process we have found that all of our instructors' syllabi should contain more information to help students understand what is expected of them, to present a clear idea of the skills they will gain upon successful completion of the course, and how their progress will be assessed.

One of the courses offered, The Internet for Musicians was designed to present a new resource to students training for careers in the music and recording industries. The unprecedented growth and expansion of the Internet has required updating and adapting the course description and curriculum to keep pace with this ever-changing technology. Each adjunct who has taught this course has brought his own special background and business experience with the Internet into the classroom and these skills have contributed to the development of the course curriculum. We feel that this course will require regular revision and modification to keep pace with the evolving technology. The Advanced Desktop Digital Audio course was offered for the first time in the Spring of 2004. This course teaches practical recording, editing, and mixing techniques on a software/hardware platform that has become the industry standard. With enhancements to the computer/music lab, this course will need to undergo a curriculum adjustment as new equipment is integrated into the facility, allowing additional techniques and topics to be taught.

Even though our lab facilities have been greatly expanded and improved there is still much that should be done to provide students with more hands-on time in the studio and

lab. An opportunity available to students at some schools is the chance to schedule studio time outside of class and produce their own projects for practice. Since that is not an option at this time, because of space and time limitations, we are constantly seeking additional opportunities to accomplish this important goal. Another solution has been to provide students with portable equipment allowing them to separate into smaller groups. Smaller class size has also helped.

In order to better assess the needs and expectations of students, some of our instructors circulate a survey in their first class, which is designed to highlight specific goals of students. We are encouraging all of our instructors to do the same.

Another area of needed improvement is in the course content of the Advanced Studio Recording class. While presenting some new topics to students this class has focused mostly on providing students with additional hands-on time in the studio. It has been determined that students entering this class need more reinforcement of basic equipment operation and production techniques introduced in the Intro to Studio Recording class.

We encourage feedback and suggestions from students and in this way have identified other areas that need improvement. From the beginning students have complained that the content of the Studio Maintenance class is too far over their heads. While careful to avoid “dumbing down” the class, we have been working with the instructor to solve this problem. Some changes that have been made include a simpler approach when introducing electronic equations and mathematical formulas, a more rudimentary presentation of electronic test equipment, and more time spent reviewing past topics before introducing new information.

In a short period of time the Music Technology program has formed a solid foundation upon which to build for the future. Up until a year ago the creation of the program and facilities was accomplished by one individual. With the recent addition of a second full time instructor we are for the first time able to see beyond the day-to-day administrative activities and demands of maintaining and upgrading the recording studio and labs. We are now beginning to re-evaluate some of our course content and classroom methods. While there are opportunities for continued improvement we feel that the quality of our instructors, facilities and training are very good.

Conclusion

Virtually our entire enrollment results from word-of-mouth recommendations by current and former students. Considering the fact that our enrollment numbers have exceeded all of our projections, we feel that our reputation speaks for itself and is a good indicator of the quality of the program.

Academic Audit-Part 2 Performance by Focal Area

Focal Area 1 Learning Objectives

1. General Description of the Quality Processes Pertaining to Learning Objectives

A. Define Quality in Terms of Outcomes. The educational objectives of the Music Technology Program, as reflected in our mission statement, are to introduce students to the various technical, creative, and business areas of the music and recording industries. It is our goal that students become capable and/or employable in their chosen area of interest. Some of our students are music industry veterans who are already employed and wish to learn new technologies to use in their current profession.

Expected program outcomes include technological competency, scientific analysis and reasoning, knowledge of contemporary issues. Specific skills students should learn include communication skills such as writing, speaking, and listening, problem solving, teamwork, and critical and creative thinking.

B. Focus On How Things Get Done. Learning objectives are adjusted when necessary. Our philosophy is to enlist individuals as adjunct instructors of the highest professional and ethical caliber, with years of experience in their respective fields, provide them with state-of-the-art facilities, within the constraints of a comparatively small budget, and materials of the highest quality. We do not employ career teachers who have studied the recording and music businesses. Our instructors are successful individuals with proven track records who have a keen desire to help others by sharing their experience and knowledge.

It is our desire to provide students with a wide variety of equipment, including software, which we strive to update as often as our limited budget allows. The amount and expense of equipment is so great, and evolves at such a rapid pace, that no school can train students on every piece. Our approach is to provide representative examples in most categories, and instruct students in the underlying principles common to all. Rather than learn one specific piece they then have the knowledge and understanding to apply what they have learned to most examples, regardless of vintage or brand.

C. Base Decisions On Facts. Advisory committee meetings provide the opportunity to review learning objectives, trends and discuss course additions with industry professionals and former students. Informal discussions with industry pros provide feedback as well. In most cases responses are not formally documented, but are discussed with adjunct instructors. Each class complements the others and fulfills another facet of the mission.

D. Strive for Coherence. In the technical courses, the learning objectives are closely tied and appear coherent. Students have expressed how topics discussed in the technical courses are interrelated. The same has been said of the Music

Publishing, Business of Music, and Songwriting courses. The Songwriting courses and the Fundamentals of Music course have learning objectives that reinforce one another also.

E. *Learn from Best Practice.* Most of our courses were loosely designed based on similar courses at other institutions. We regularly look at syllabi from other institutions to compare learning objectives and classroom methods.

F. *Work Collaboratively.* Learning objectives are determined by a process of collaboration with past and present adjunct instructors, industry professionals, and our advisory committee.

G. *Make Continuous Improvement a Priority.* There is no formal timetable to review learning objectives. Instructors are encouraged to develop their own supplemental survey to continually identify areas that can be improved.

2. Summary Assessments of the Quality

Application of the Seven Quality Principles

Quality principles rating

Define quality in terms of outcomes:	(5) applied extensively
Focus on how things get done:	(4) applied to some degree
Base decisions on facts:	(5) applied extensively
Strive for coherence:	(5) applied extensively
Learn from best practice:	(4) applied to some degree
Work collaboratively:	(5) applied extensively
Make continuous improvement a priority:	(5) applied extensively

3. Education Quality Process Maturity Assessment

Education quality process maturity rating: (4)

Between informal and organized effort best describes our maturity in this focal area. Informal effort best describes our plans to consider the use of concepts introduced in the audit process, such as additional communications skills. Organized effort best describes our teaching skills specific to music technology.

Focal Area 2 Curriculum and Co-curriculum

General Description of the Quality Processes Pertaining to Curriculum and Co-curriculum

A. Define quality in terms of outcomes. Our curriculum was designed to include courses that focus on the various areas outlined in our mission statement. Within the limited time frame of a one-year program, our goal is to familiarize students with no prior experience or exposure, to the broad range of skills needed by those seeking employment, or training to create their own businesses within the music and recording industries.

B. Focus how things get done. Our Curriculum was written at the creation of this program, and resulted from researching similar programs and departments. The curriculum directly supports and was designed to achieve the learning objectives. Our intention was, in some cases, to combine into one course what would be taught in several courses, in much greater detail, in a two or four year program. For example, a longer course of study might offer separate courses in music marketing, merchandising, artist promotion, artist management, music business law, and the operation of record companies and radio. When attempting to combine these into one course, only a brief and rudimentary approach can be taken. However, we feel that introducing students to all of these areas is preferable to only covering one in more depth.

C. Base decisions on facts. Textbooks used in most of our courses are selected through a process that includes comparing texts used by similar courses at other schools, conferences between the program coordinator and the adjunct faculty members and, on occasion, recommendations of our advisory committee. In lieu of published textbooks some of our instructors have chosen to create their own text materials. We are always evaluating alternate texts, and make recommendations to our adjunct instructors when we find alternative options.

We are always seeking ways to update our curriculum in order to keep pace with the rapid changes occurring in technologies. We are gradually and methodically adding new courses to our curriculum. For example, at our last meeting our advisory committee discussed the addition of a course in mastering. All agreed that this is a logical and useful addition to the program. In discussions with students we learned that there is a great demand for training in this area.

D. Strive for coherence. All of our courses were designed to complement each other and function as a whole to fulfill our mission statement. Student feedback suggests that our curriculum appears coherent.

E. Learn from best practice. Our courses were loosely designed based on similar courses at other institutions. We regularly look at syllabi from other institutions to compare learning objectives and classroom methods.

F. *Work collaboratively.* Collaboration consists of curriculum planning with the advisory committee, the curriculum committee and program instructors. Due to the large amount of information covered in a short time, compromises are necessary. For example, our music business course provides a brief and general overview of many segments of the industry that might better be served by separate courses in a 2 or 4-year program.

G. *Make continuous improvement a priority.* Continuous improvement is a priority. We strive to provide students with the latest technology and instruction on this technology by industry professionals serving as adjunct instructors. We regularly look for additions to the curriculum to keep students trained on the latest technologies.

2. Summary Assessments of the Quality Process

Application of the Seven Quality Principles

Quality principles rating

Define quality in terms of outcomes:	(5) applied extensively
Focus on how things get done:	(5) applied extensively
Base decisions on facts:	(4) applied to some degree
Strive for coherence:	(5) applied extensively
Learn from best practice:	(4) applied to some degree
Work collaboratively:	(4) applied to some degree
Make continuous improvement a priority:	(4) applied to some degree

3. Education Quality Process Maturity Assessment

Education quality process maturity rating: (4)

Between informal and organized effort best describes our maturity in this focal area.
 Informal effort best describes our use of concepts introduced in the audit process.
 Organized effort best describes our program and course content specific to music technology.

Focal Area 3 Teaching and Learning

1. General Description of the Quality Processes Pertaining to Teaching and Learning

- A. *Define quality in terms of outcomes.* Teaching and learning methods include lectures, interactive demonstrations, group projects, oral and written presentations, role-playing exercises, hands-on learning, worksheets, recording sessions, and field trips. Instructors are encouraged to use the results of these teaching methods in an ongoing effort of improvement. Student course evaluations are also used.

- B. *Focus on how things get done.* Different courses use different teaching methods. For example in MST-1130 and MST-1230 students are introduced to equipment used in professional recording studios by describing the purpose of the equipment. The equipment is demonstrated and, whenever possible, students are encouraged to turn knobs and familiarize themselves with the "feel" of the piece. Many students are intimidated by the amount and complexity of the equipment, and this strives to get them to see machines as "just nuts and bolts" that aren't going to explode if they hit the wrong button. Actual recording sessions are hosted featuring a wide variety of musical artists and styles. Here the students learn to set up the studio, operate the equipment, then disassemble and put away the equipment. Every recording session is completely unpredictable. Although this may appear chaotic to the outside observer, it provides students with new and different troubleshooting and problem solving opportunities such as those they will encounter in the workplace. Other methods include videos, websites, and CD-ROMs, some featuring well known record producers and engineers. In the advanced course more class time is devoted to actual recording sessions. One primary goal of the advanced course is to provide students more studio lab time. Teaching methods used in MST-1220 and MST-1320 include interactive discussions of songwriting techniques, aural analysis of other songwriters' work, team writing assignments, videos, and semi-regular guest speakers and field trips. We are always interested in ideas for positive change.

- C. *Base decisions on facts.* We continually research industry trends, journals, seminars, and printed material in an effort to stay on top of changing technologies and ideas related to teaching and learning these technologies. Whenever possible instructors adjust some teaching methods based on feedback from student course evaluations and a continual process of reassessment of classroom methods.

- D. *Strive for coherence.* Students generally perceive teaching and learning processes as being coherent.

- E. *Learn from best practice.* Teaching and learning methods have evolved from a combination of observation of teaching methods employed in similar courses and examination of many potential textbooks and suggestions from

curriculum committee members, industry professionals, and students of this and other programs.

- F. *Work collaboratively.* There is limited collaboration due to the high percentage of adjunct instructors on our faculty roster. Sometimes collaboration takes place between the program coordinator and individual adjunct instructors. Other times it is left up to the instructor.
- G. *Make continuous improvement a priority.* In an effort to continually improve teaching and learning methods, instructors are encouraged to examine the effectiveness of their teaching methods on a regular basis.

2. Summary Assessments of the Quality Process

Application of the Seven Quality Principles

Quality principles rating

Define quality in terms of outcomes:	(4) applied to some degree
Focus on how things get done:	(4) applied to some degree
Base decisions on facts:	(4) applied to some degree
Strive for coherence:	(4) applied to some degree
Learn from best practice:	(2) not applied now but might be useful
Work collaboratively:	(4) applied to some degree
Make continuous improvement a priority:	(4) applied to some degree

3. Education Quality Process Maturity Assessment

Education quality process maturity rating: (4)

Between informal and organized effort best describes our maturity in this focal area.
Informal effort best describes our use of concepts introduced in the audit process.
Organized effort best describes our teaching and learning methods specific to music technology.

Focal Area 4 Student Learning Assessment

1. General Description of the Quality Processes Pertaining to Student Learning Assessment

A. Define quality in terms of outcomes. Key indicators of learning assessment vary according to course. For example, in MST-1110 students are assessed on their ability to read music through the use of worksheets, group performance, and oral and written exams. In MST-1130 and MST-1230 student learning is assessed by the use of weekly quizzes, exams, class discussions, and observations by the instructor as students demonstrate their grasp of studio and production techniques during live recording sessions.

B. Focus how things get done. In MST-1330 students' ability to apply techniques of troubleshooting and repair of equipment is assessed by the following: When you plug it in, does it work? Other material presented in class such as basic electronics theory is assessed through the use of discussions, quizzes and exams. In MST-1340 students are assessed by how successfully they complete assigned tasks and projects, the outcome of role-playing exercises, and written exams.

C. Base decisions on facts. Assessment methods are generally left to the instructors, and are chosen for specific courses. For example, In MST-1220 and MST-1320 students are assessed according to their ability to write a song. We don't care if it's a "good" or a "bad" song as long as they are able to complete the process. Many of our students are not seeking a career as songwriters or composers and are taking this course to learn to work more effectively with professional writers and composers. In the advanced course, students are assessed on their ability to apply what they learn through public performances of their original material in front of live audiences. This constitutes their final exam.

D. Strive for coherence. Assessment methods are designed to reinforce teaching and learning. For example, In MST-1240 and MST-1360 student learning is assessed through the use of written and application oriented quizzes and exams, assigned projects and tasks, and personal dialog with the students on an individual basis.

E. Learn from best practice. We have informally viewed a limited number of written exams from similar courses. In some cases we have reviewed manufacturers online certification exams.

F. Work collaboratively. We collaborate informally on student assessment but it has traditionally been left to the individual instructor.

G. Make continuous improvement a priority. Learning assessment methods are considered periodically. For example, MST-1240 and MST-1360 are replacing some question and answer tests with discussion type tests, which require critical thinking and problem solving skills.

2. Summary Assessments of the Quality Process

Application of the Seven Quality Principles

Quality principles rating

Define quality in terms of outcomes:	(4) applied to some degree
Focus on how things get done:	(5) applied extensively
Base decisions on facts:	(4) applied to some degree
Strive for coherence:	(4) applied to some degree
Learn from best practice:	(2) not applied now but might be useful
Work collaboratively:	(4) applied to some degree
Make continuous improvement a priority:	(4) applied to some degree

3. Education Quality Process Maturity Assessment

Education quality process maturity rating: (4)

Between informal and organized effort best describes our maturity in this focal area.
Informal effort best describes our use of concepts introduced in the audit process.
Organized effort best describes our student learning assessment methods specific to music technology.

Focal Area 5 Quality Assurance

1. General Description of the Quality Processes Pertaining to Quality Assurance

- A. *Define Quality in Terms of Outcomes.* Teacher performance is evaluated by the results of student course evaluations completed by students in each class [when completing surveys, students are encouraged to offer suggestions for improving classroom methods. Instructors are also encouraged to seriously consider the results of these surveys and incorporate them into their teaching methods when applicable. In addition to the surveys, student feedback is always welcome and taken seriously.], discussions with the program coordinator [ideas and suggestions brought to the coordinator's attention by students are relayed to instructors and these are then discussed and again, are incorporated into the instructors' classroom methods when applicable.], and feedback from employers of our graduates and supervisors of our interns. Business people associated with our interns usually have positive comments and in many cases request additional students to serve as interns.
- B. *Focus how things get done.* Quality assurance has been of primary importance to the entire program, where teaching methods have largely been the responsibility of the instructors, and curriculum has been a collaborative effort, as described earlier.
- C. *Base decisions on facts.* Other indications of quality are increased placement rates, positive feedback from employer surveys, the advisory committee, and comments regarding Co-op students.
- D. *Strive for coherence.* The quality assurance methods seem to reinforce each other. The majority of our courses are technical in nature and offer training in areas which are interrelated and provide what we believe is a coherent course of study to most students.
- E. *Learn from best practice.* We have not examined quality assurance practices at other institutions.
- F. *Work collaboratively.* There has been some collaboration on the creation of specific quality assurance methods. This is an area where more can be done.
- G. *Make continuous improvement a priority.* Continuous improvement is a priority of this program. However, as a young program much of our efforts have been devoted to improving our facilities, and this continues to occupy much of our time and energy.

2. Summary Assessments of the Quality Process

Application of the Seven Quality Principles

Quality principles rating

Define quality in terms of outcomes:	(4) applied to some degree
Focus on how things get done:	(4) applied to some degree
Base decisions on facts:	(5) applied extensively
Strive for coherence:	(4) applied to some degree
Learn from best practice:	(2) not applied now but might be useful
Work collaboratively:	(4) applied to some degree
Make continuous improvement a priority:	(4) applied to some degree

3. Education Quality Process Maturity Assessment

Education quality process maturity rating: (4)

Between informal and organized effort best describes our maturity in this focal area.
Informal effort best describes our use of concepts introduced in the audit process.
Organized effort best describes our quality assurance methods specific to music technology.

Potential Initiatives

With the support of the chief academic officer and divisional deans, it has been proposed that all of those involved in the academic audit process work together in an ongoing process to develop a true curriculum or learning plan as outlined by Stark and Lattuca (1997) and Diamond (1998). As Massy wrote in his paper addressing the issue of education quality processes:

Quality processes span five interrelated domains of activity. None of the five are optional. Exemplary practice in one domain does not automatically produce good performance elsewhere, although failure in one makes progress harder in the others (p. 2).

While some of the programs included in the academic audit are working to move from an informal to a more formal process in some areas, none believe that they can substantiate an overall quality rating of seven in any area.

Given the interrelatedness of the five focal areas and the necessity for them being tied together in an overall system, it does not make sense to address one area without regard for its impact on the other four. The curriculum design process has been described repeatedly in the literature as an iterative process where changes in one area require rethinking and changes to other areas.

As we moved through the self-study process for the academic audit, it became apparent that everyone brought something to the table for discussion and thought. This being the case, it appears obvious that all interested parties should be a part of this ongoing effort. Based on the literature, we believe this will be the first step in a long-range and ongoing process with a minimum time frame of three years. No one on campus can remember such an effort ever being undertaken. Much of the curriculum design completed up to this point has primarily been undertaken on a course by course basis and usually by an individual faculty person working alone. To our knowledge, a formal process involving multiple programs that addresses overall student outcomes has not been done while a great deal of work has been done on individual competencies in the individual programs.

In this project, it is anticipated that each of the focal areas will be addressed with weekly meetings of approximately one hour. Initially, these will be group meetings. As we move through the process, some of the meetings will be on a program basis. It is anticipated that team leaders will take an active part in this process, particularly as the process shifts from group meetings to program level activities. Since this is a new process to us, we are not comfortable with making an estimate of the time needed for each of the five focal areas or for the project in total. It is, however, anticipated that the resulting system will become ongoing as an integrated part of the Nashville State Community College culture; at least in the Business and Applied Arts Division. One of the overriding goals of these initiatives is to move closer to what Tagg (2002) has described as the Learning Paradigm College and to use what Huba and Freed (2000) describe as learner-centered assessment.

Costs

The major resource required for this initiative is one that is in short supply—faculty time. That is the reason for the three-year time frame. Since many of the programs included in the academic audit are already accredited by the Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP), a great deal of work has already been done. Under better working conditions (more time for faculty involvement), it might have been possible to shorten the time frame—for at least some of the accredited programs.

In addition to faculty time, released time (three credit hours) for one of the team leaders (who also serves as a “super dude”) has been requested and approved for the spring 2005 semester. The only other cost foreseen at this time is for copying and printing, and this should be covered by normal operating budgets.

Initiatives by Individual Programs

In addition to this major initiative, several programs have already begun initiatives on their own such as expanding makeup of advisory committee membership, minor tweaking of the course syllabi, formalizing the process of advisory committee approvals of syllabi, and curriculum changes.

Music Technology Program Initiatives

1. New course in disc mastering

This is a subject that is discussed briefly in two of our courses, but is a topic that should be taught in depth. It is not very well understood by most students and the interest level in taking a mastering class is high.

2. Surround sound system and instruction

Interest in this technology is rising as more consumers acquire surround sound systems for their homes. A number of recording engineers are involved in remixing stereo recordings for this format.

3. More space for studios and labs

As enrollment increases, so does the need for additional studio and lab space. Available space is extremely limited, but we are meeting and exploring the possibilities.

4. Open lab time

Students would benefit greatly from an open lab offering since the number workstations and studios available limit personal hands-on time. Currently there are 2 students per workstation and 10-12 students per studio.

5. Enlist other guest speakers

We have had offers from other industry pros to speak in classes. We are in the process of evaluating which classes would be the proper forums for certain guests.

A brief outline for each of the focal areas follows:

Potential Initiatives – Focal Area: Learning Objectives

The literature is consistent in its findings and recommendations that the outcomes or competencies must be the first step in the process of developing learning or curriculum plans. As we worked through the academic audit process, it became apparent that most of the programs under review have a good understanding of outcomes for students in courses in the major. What is missing are:

- Statements of core competencies outside the major
- An understanding of how core competencies should be integrated in the courses in the majors themselves
- Statements of competencies that are widely available to all constituencies
- As to program learning objectives, there are no standards for how objectives should be written
- Many of the objectives that exist are not written in performance terms

In order to overcome these and other shortcomings in the area of learning outcomes, the process will begin with an in-depth review of the process of developing learning outcomes. Sessions will cover the field of competencies, outcomes, and objectives; how they differ, how they are the same; how they should be written as well as their significance in the overall learning plan. A number of authors (Diamond, 1998; League for Innovation in the Community College, 2000; Stark, 1997; Steihl and Lewchuk, 2002; Tagg, 2003) have described this process in detail and will be used as resources as we develop our statements of competencies, outcomes, and objectives.

Deliverables

At the completion of this initiative, it is anticipated that the following items will be completed for each program involved:

- Agreed upon core competencies outside the major that are correctly written and also widely published and distributed.
- Revised course syllabi with valid learning objectives including appropriate competencies outside the major courses.
- The creation of a curriculum handbook that details the curriculum design and planning process. This handbook will describe the entire learning planning process that links outcomes, instructional methods, expected out of class assignments, and how outcomes will be assessed. This document will be based on best practices and will use the Curriculum Handbook of San Bernardino Valley

College as a starting point. This handbook can be found online at <http://sbvc.sbccd.cc.ca.us/OnlineCurriculum/Files/Handbook/Curriculum%20Handbook%202004.2005.pdf>.

- Web sites for each department that describe the curricula of the individual programs including the competency and outcome statements developed during this process.

It is anticipated that the list of deliverables will expand as we work together on the focal area of learning outcomes.

Potential Initiatives Focal Area: Curriculum and Co-Curriculum

During the audit process, it became apparent that the degree to which the programs strive for coherence varies from program-to-program. Within the courses in the major there appears to be a significant degree of coherence but, in most cases, it is informal and not documented. The purpose of initiatives in this area is to formalize the curriculum, include learning outcomes outside the majors themselves and provide forms of documentation that will be institutionalized across and within the various majors in order to integrate outcomes from the students' majors with those included in their liberal education.

In the initiatives described under outcomes, the faculty involved will develop outcomes both within the major fields themselves as well as in areas such as critical thinking, ethics, communication skills, and teamwork (to name a few). Once these skill sets have been identified and reduced to writing, they will be integrated into a coherent curriculum.

Maki (2004), provides examples of matrices which have been used successfully by other institutions to document the coherence of curricula. She also introduces the concept of the curriculum map which is used to document the distribution of learning opportunities that contribute to shared expectations of student learning.

Deliverables

The participants in this initiative will work collaboratively to develop curriculum maps for their programs. This is envisioned as an iterative process as are most of the initiatives described in this document. The major outcome of this initiative will be the curriculum map which, in turn, depends on the other initiatives described in this document.

Potential Initiatives Focal Area: Teaching and Learning

One of the discoveries made during the academic audit was the predominance of the lecture as a teaching method. In many of the programs under review, faculty members have made strides in modifying the standard lecture to include other techniques but they are still variations of the traditional lecture.

The purpose of this initiative is to make faculty aware of the shortcomings of the lecture method, particularly where long-term retention and deep learning are concerned, and to help them become aware of the efficacy of other teaching methods. It is also the intent of this initiative to begin the process of expanding the array of techniques actually in use. Topics covered will include but will not be limited to:

- The shortcomings of the lecture method
- Deep vs. shallow learning
- Active learning
- Cooperative learning
- Collaborative learning
- Problem-based learning
- Case-based learning
- Relating outcomes statements to teaching methods
- Mastery learning
- Teaching to multiple learning styles
- The importance of metacognition
- Creating instruction that is both active and interactive
- Learner-centered instruction
- Using the Web to create active instruction
- Using formative assessment as learning tool
- The physical basis for learning

Deliverables

The short-term goal of this initiative is to evaluate each course in the major fields to find significant challenges where students regularly struggle and then to design and test instructional methods to help students master these “problem areas”. Each instructor will identify one particularly troublesome area and will then work together as a group to identify new methods of instruction. The new methods will then be tested in the classroom and reworked as necessary. Faculty will then work over the three-year period to identify additional problem areas for students and develop and test new instructional methods.

Faculty will develop and include formative assessment techniques in their courses. Faculty will learn to develop active learning techniques using Web technology and will include these techniques in their WebCT shells. (All faculty at NSCC have WebCT shells created automatically at the beginning of each term.) Van Weigel (2002) writes about the power of using technology to increase the reach of the instructor.

Potential Initiatives Focal Area: Student Learning Assessment

Once competencies and outcomes are determined, the next step is to develop assessment activities that align with them. There are two levels of outcomes that must be addressed: program outcomes and course outcomes. One of the things learned during the academic

audit process was that the number and efficacy of assessment activities varies from program to program. In most programs there are a number of assessment activities, but most of these relate specifically to course content in the major itself. As far as other skills outside of the major courses are concerned, little has been done on a consistent and organized basis except for the C-base test which, unfortunately, is not broken down by major. A number of authors (Maki, 2004; Suskie, 2004; Huba and Freed, 2000; Allen, 2004) make the case for coherent assessment being a part of a truly coherent curriculum. The same authors also maintain that assessment must be aligned with outcomes and should be formative as well as summative. Another important aspect of assessment is that, when done properly, it focuses on teaching and learning as much as it does actual student outcomes. Topics that will be covered in this focal area will include but will not be limited to:

- Formative assessment
- Summative assessment
- The importance of feedback and how to provide effective feedback
- Using the Web as a means of formative and summative assessment
- Authentic assessment
- Alternative assessment
- Embedded assessment
- Genuine assessment
- Learner centered assessment
- Aligning assessment with outcome expectancies and teaching and learning methods
- Creating assessment rubrics
- Principles of good practice in assessment
- Promoting learning with assessment
- Course embedded assessment
- Using assessment data to revise outcomes statements
- Using assessment to improve learning experiences

Deliverables

Once outcomes have been clearly defined, assessment methods have been developed, and teaching methods have been aligned with both, it will be appropriate to create new course syllabi for all courses in the curriculum. It is anticipated that syllabi will undergo several revisions as we move through the process. Some changes that are needed immediately can be made short-term. Grunert (1997) wrote what has become the standard document on writing the course syllabus. Working collaboratively faculty will determine what format our syllabi should follow.

Working collaboratively, faculty will work on courses one-by-one beginning with those that are the most difficult for students to include formative assessment techniques and learning tools that serve the purposes of formative assessment. Faculty will develop alternative assessments where appropriate.

Faculty will develop Web-based assessments that help students know where they stand prior to tests and exams.

Faculty will develop and document appropriate forms of feedback to help students learn from their mistakes.

Potential Initiatives – Focal Area: Quality Assurance

This major initiative, as well as program initiatives as outlined in the foregoing discussions, is intended to improve student outcomes. The programs that are participating in the academic audit either have in place already or will develop through the major initiative tracking mechanisms that allow assessment of student outcomes and tracking of program graduates. It is the intent of the initiatives as defined earlier to improve learning outcomes. The progress and efficacy of these initiatives will be judged by improvement in program assessments. Additionally, much of the work as outlined, in addition to improving outcomes, is intended to formalize and document the curriculum design process.

The major premise of this initiative is that faculty working collaboratively when made aware of current literature can document and improve current practices in the overall area of curriculum planning. The plan as outlined is to present all involved faculty with current thinking in the area of best practices and then allow them to work together to determine when and how they should best be applied in their own programs. One of the major thrusts of this program is to improve the use of existing as well as new assessment data to improve teaching and learning and student outcomes. This will allow continuous improvement based upon facts.

Given the level of support provided by the chief academic officer, deans, program coordinators, team leaders, and the facilitator, it appears that circumstances are the best they have ever been at Nashville State Community College for implementing such a program.

Potential Initiatives – References

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Commitment to Improvement

As Vice President for Academic Affairs, I enthusiastically and fully support the major initiative outlined in this self-study. The proposed project will require three years, and the coordinated effort will serve as motivation to all participating faculty. The collaboration across programs will ensure that the academic audit project has maximum benefit in the improvement of our curriculum. I understand that some financial support will be necessary for this project, including release time for a faculty member to coordinate and monitor this major effort.

Dr. Ellen Weed
Vice President of Academic Affairs

As the division dean for Business and Applied Arts, I fully support the major initiative outlined in the prior section of this self-study. This three-year plan will allow faculty members the opportunity to sustain the effort put forth over the past few months in reviewing and reflecting on their program's education quality processes and to make ongoing quality improvement a major priority. Faculty members from different disciplines will be working together throughout the process which will strengthen collaboration among faculty.

Karen Stevenson
Dean, Business & Applied Arts

Commitment to Improvement Music Technology

Music Technology has submitted a group of initiatives that will continue our commitment to improving the training available to our students. We believe that providing students with state-of-the-art facilities (within the limits of our budget) and as much hands-on time as possible is one of the most important objectives of a technical training program. With the rapid technological changes in our field, our commitment also includes introducing new courses to meet these changes. Our two highest priority initiatives, which are the responsibility of the program coordinator, are (a) **surround sound system installation and instruction**, and (b) **more lab and hands-on time**. (a) A budget has been approved and the equipment to accomplish this will be installed this semester. (b) This is an ongoing quest, since space and time are limited. Initiative (a) will help by providing another system. Without additional physical space, this will be difficult to do adequately, but we are committed to making all possible progress in this area.